

**University of Saskatchewan - Graduate Students' Association**



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**GSA Executive Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, November 4, 2015 - GSA Commons 5:00PM – 7:00PM**

**Present:** David Bennett (VP Finance), Hardi Shahadu (VP Student Affairs), Natalia Terekohova (VP External), Jebunessa Chapola (VP Academic), Ziad Ghaith (VP Operations and Communications), Rajat Chakravarty (President).

**Regrets:** Dana Carriere (Aboriginal Liason)

- 1. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 5:04PM
- 2. Approval of Chair:** The President asks if anyone wishes to be chair. Seeing no volunteers the President volunteers. Moved by VP Operations. Seconded by VP Student Affairs. All in favour. President approved as a chair for this meeting. **Motion carries.**
- 3. Approval of Minutes:** VP Operations asks to take the minutes. Moved by GSA President, seconded by VP Student Affairs. All in favour. **Motion carries.**
- 4. Approval of the Agenda:** VP Student Affairs moves to add item 6.9 **Discussion on GSA position statement on safety meeting.** Moved by VP Student Affairs, seconded by VP Academic. All in favour. **Motion carries.**
- 5. Approval of the Minutes of GSA Executive Meetings on October 28, 2015**  
The minutes is available on the Association website. President asks for any discussion. VP Student Affairs requests VP Operations to circulate meeting minutes to the GSA executives before posting them on the Website. VP Operations notes that this would be double approval of the meeting minutes, but he agrees to circulate the minutes before posting them on the website.  
Approval of 28/10/2015 minutes moved by VP Operations, seconded by VP Academic. All in favour. **Motion carries**

## **6. Items for Actions/Information**

### **6.1. Three minutes reports**

[Execs]

GSA President asks the execs to have three minutes report each.

#### **VP Student Affairs:**

VP Student Affairs notes that the last week was really busy for him. Talking about safety meeting which will be held on in Grad House on Thursday November 5<sup>th</sup>. VP Student Affairs notes that the office of Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning sent a very short notice about this meeting. Further the Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning (Patti McDougall) did not consult with the GSA before organizing this meeting. VP Student Affairs asked the University President office for a meeting to discuss this, the President Office Chief of Staff (Julian Demkiw), he noted that GSA request is reasonable. VP Students Affairs addressed some issues such as, the different needs of grad and undergrad students and why the student leadership did not consulted in organizing this meeting. The Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning decided not to postpone the meeting, she further asked her office to send an invitation the all GSA and USSU execs.

#### **VP External:**

VP External updated other execs on the health chat session, Christine Foster from student care.net will visit the GSA on 17<sup>th</sup> of November. VP External notes the she plans to have Zumba class for one of the health chat sessions, but such session will cost around CAD 250. She think we still have time to figure out how to run such session as she plans it to take place in February. On another topic, VP External informed other execs that CFS sent a compute to the GSA earlier this week, this computer is supposed to be used to print out the international student cards. Unfortunately the computer is not working, CFS promised to replace it.

#### **President:**

GSA President starts his report by updating other execs on the Board Games Night. The event took place on 30/10/2015. The President notes that the event was very successful, more than 100 people attended the event. The GSA managed to sell out some alcoholic drinks which help the association to cover fall orientation expenses. The President mentioned that GSA Aboriginal

Liaison put a lot of efforts in organizing the night, further VP Student Affairs helped in setting up the commons for the event.

The President attended grad student administration forum on 4/11/2015. He met with the university secretaries. He spoke about the GSA Council, and encourage the secretaries to help in the Council hiring process. Finally, the President is currently working on building a new website for the GSA. He has already started creating it, he notes that this is a time consuming process, further he asks all execs to contact him or VP Operations if they have any suggestions about the new website content.

### **VP Academic:**

The VP academic was involved in the Industry Talk event which is organized by the University Career Centre. She mentioned that about 100 people participated in the event. The VP Academic with VP External represented GSA in one of ISSAC events.

VP Academic met with the President Office Chief of Staff (Julian Demkiw) to discuss with him the possibility of sponsoring GSA conference which will take place spring. The President Office Chief of Staff informed her that they are still not sure if the university will sponsor the conference, or how much the university will allocate for it.

### **VP Finance:**

VP Finance notes that the authorization of the renewal of our commercial liability and property insurance has been executed. The annual premium will be \$3807. That premium is less than \$100 higher than last year even though we have increased the replacement value declarations for coverage amounts. VP Finance added that he is pleased this is done as it was a bit stressful going back and forth ensuring the proper documents were sent and filed out correctly etc. The existing policy expires at 12:01AM on Nov. 5th so there wasn't a whole lot of time to spare. I will mention the Director's and Officers Non-Profit Liability Coverage when we get to the motion. Other things to note that the GSA Budget Committee is diligently working and we have a meeting scheduled for next week. The other task that took up my focus since our last meeting as attending the CAGS Conference which I'll talk about in the specific section.

The Awards Committee of the CGSR met yesterday to rank and approve tri-Council allocations. I'm part of this committee but the terms of reference mean that only faculty along with previous

award winners can be part of the panel so there is still some student representation just from a previous winner. The first instalment of our Health and Dental Premiums (approx. \$337,000.00 is due on November 15th). I'm just waiting to receive a cheque from the University before we can go ahead and process that payment.

In less positive news, there was a bit of confusion with the counting of sales at the Halloween Games Night event. I'm trying to get to the bottom of it but as I wasn't there and there were no physical tickets sold so it is impossible to know how many beverages were actually sold and how much money should be in the cash box. It looks like someone just wrote down the wrong figure when originally counting the sales on the event night. The total beverage sales for the night according to my calculations are \$184.80 which means the totality of Orientation Events has now broken even and we are about \$20 ahead on that budget line with still some wine left to sell. It does seem clear that we or I need to implement and oversee better cash handling procedures to make sure things like this don't happen again.

The last thing to note is that a group of Graduate Students from several departments in the Sciences have sent a letter asking for \$500 to help host the annual Women in Physics Conference. They've already secured some high end funding from the Canadian Light Source, Department of Physics, The Institute of Quantum Computing at U of Waterloo) but they will need to raise about \$25,000. I would like to support them as this seems to really fit the mission of the GSA. They're right now just going through the process of forming either a club to apply for the funding or PEGASUS could apply but they can only apply once per year so it would preclude them from having any of their own events. For groups hosting high-level national or international conferences there needs to be an exception or some other avenue of the GSA providing funding support. I'm hoping the Policy Committee can take this up.

### **VP Operations and Communications:**

VP Operations notes that the last week was quit, he was busy in communicating with the bursary winners, further he organized the bursary committee meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> of October. VP Operations mentioned that the GSA received a request from the college of Pharmacy and Nutrition asking GSA to nominate a grad student to sit on their Associate Dean for Research and Academic

affairs search committee. He communicated with grad student the college of Pharmacy and Nutrition regarding this issue. He will give full updates about this in Item 6.6

## **6.2. ISSAC's global village event**

**[N. Terekhova]**

ISSAC is planning Global Village Event on 26<sup>th</sup> of November. VP External is plan to have some graduate students to set up a booth. She contacted VP Operations to provide her with the GSA social clubs contact information. She has sent a request to India Students' Association, Nepalese Students' Association, and Persian Students' Association to help in setting up a booth. She hope more social clubs to get ratified to involve them.

VP Operations notes that according to our Policy, the ratification period has already passed (30/9/2015) he suggests that the governance committee to change this date to give more time for the students to ratify their social clubs.

GSA President asked of there is any further discussion on this item, seeing none. the execs moved to discuss the next item.

## **6.3. Update on Gala and Conference coordinator applications [N. Terekhova/J.Chapola]**

VP External updated the GSA execs about the Conference and Gala Applications. GSA received about 50 applications, not all of them are complete. 5 applicants applied for Gala coordinator position, while about 20 applicants applied for Conference coordinator position.

VP Operations suggested that VP Externals and Academic to get shortlist and to start planning for the interviews. VP External mentioned that Councilor Mohammed Rafati applied for one of these position. She informed the GSA execs that Mohammad Rafati. She suggested to include two councilors in the interviewing committee to ensure transparency and equal opportunities for all of the applicants. The President thinks that one from the GSA office (VP Operations or GSA office manager) should be part of the interviewing committee as the new coordinators will work in the GSA for few hours every week. VP Student Affairs agreed with the President, and he added that it is important to include the GSA execs in the interviewing committee, he further shows an interest in setting on this committee.

VP Externals and VP Academic will meet some time to organize this, they will organized the shortlist and schedule the interviewing committee probably sometime next week.

#### **6.4. GSA conference funding**

**[J.Chapola]**

VP Academic met with the President Office Chief of Staff (Julian Demkiw) to discuss with him the possibility of sponsoring GSA conference which will take place spring. The President Office Chief of Staff informed her that they are still not sure if the university will sponsor the conference, or how much the university will allocate for it. He mentioned that the university might decrease the conference sponsorship to less than CAD5000.

The President suggested to start fund raising once we hire the conference coordinator. VP Academic asked the VP Finance if GSA has any budget for that, he replied: GSA has no budget for the conference and it will be all fund raising as the last year.

VP Operation suggested VP Academic to approach different departments in the university. He further suggested her to show how important is this conference for the university grad students, this will encourage different departments to sponsor the conference and he think that this way the department heads will encourage their students to participate in this conference. VP Academic would like to talk about this during the University President breakfast later this month, the GSA President thinks it would not be a good idea.

VP Finance noted that academic publishers might help in sponsoring the conference and he suggested VP Academic to approach them. He further mentioned that he can ask the budget committee to allocate some money for the conference, but he think this will discourage some sponsors to help out.

#### **6.5. GSA commons during Fall Mid-Term Break**

**[Z. Ghaith]**

The VP Operation noticed that very few no graduate students come to the GSA Commons after 5:00PM. He suggested to close the Commons during the Fall Mid-Term Break. He further mentioned that he discussed this with the GSA Office Manager, but she was not supportive of this idea as she think it will be short notice for the GSA coordinators. VP Operations agrees with this, but he would like to bring this for voting. VP Finance suggested to close the Commons for only one day (Tuesday) the President and VP Operations think this will not save GSA money, rather it will ditruct the coordinators schedules.

VP Operation moved a motion, seconded by GSA President:

In favour (1), opposed(2), abstentions (3)

**Motion fails**

**6.6. Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Affairs in the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition (search committee)**

**[Z. Ghaith]**

The GSA received an email from Shannon Wiens from the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition on 27/10/2015. She talked to VP Finance asking information about search committees. They are arranging a search committee for Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Affairs. Their terms of reference require the GSA to appoint a graduate student to sit on this committee. VP Finance suggested her that the grad chair of the College circulate an invitation to sit on this committee and come up with a list of grad students who are interested and the GSA will pick one.

Shannon Wiens, emailed our Office Manager, and she mentioned that they were unable to come up with list of grad students due to the examination period. GSA Office Manager asked VP Operation about this. VP Operations sent an email to 8 grad students in the college of Pharmacy and Nutrition asking them to nominate a student to sit on this search committee. They nominated Mohammed Saeid, Waleed AbdulAziz to sit on the committee. VP Operation will ask GSA Office Manager to forward this name to Shannon Wiens.

GSA President, would like to use this opportunity to encourage the college of Pharmacy and Nutrition to form a Council. VP Student Affairs, mentioned that when he receive such request he forward it to other execs. VP Finance noted that such small things should be addressed by any exec if he/she see a quick solution rather waiting all execs decision.

**6.7. Academic Council/Councillors**

**[Z. Ghaith]**

VP Operations: I received an email from one of our Councillors regarding our online voting on the student forums. The Councillor mentioned in his email that the voting process was not totally correct because some alternate and voting members voted on that motion. Further GSA Chair sent an email to all of the execs regarding the Councillor list on the web site, he noticed kind of irregularity in the available lists.

VP Operations added: In one of our meeting in September I mentioned that the process of hiring the councillors is not clear and we should improve it, I cannot reject any ratified Councillor, so I upload all the ratified Councillors on our website, I suggest to have a meeting (VP Operation, GSA Chair, GSA President, VP Student Affairs) to improve this process.

VP Student Affairs: We can communicate with each council president, to make sure we have voting members according to our allocation system. VP Operations: As this is out of my portfolio, I suggest VP Student affairs to take the lead and organize this.

#### **6.8. Update on CAGS conference**

**[D. Bennett]**

As you know I attended the Canadian Association of Graduate Studies Conference in Calgary this past weekend. I'll write a full report for the Council but I wanted to note know some of my initial observations and share some important information.

The theme of the conference was reimagining the PhD. Why does that have to be done? Well the simple reason is that the majority of PhDs will not get tenure-track jobs or even jobs in academia. Working outside the academy is the new normal for PhDs and the current structure of the PhD doesn't actually do much to prepare you to be successful in that work. In many cases employers are valuing relevant experience just as much or more than education. Hiring experts have reported that a lot of people don't understand how to write a resume and why it is different from a CV. The things that are more important on a CV such as TAing and Conference publications, etc. are really not that meaningful on an employment resume. So, we as the GSA and in partnership with the Institution need to work on professional and skills development opportunities for all our grad students.

Some of the suggestions raised included offering a PD Skills week, mandatory Professional Skills seminars, Professional and Individual Development Programs that will show up on transcripts, there is a platform called <https://www.mygradskills.ca> that several Ontario universities have created that looks quite promising. Just let me show you this quick intro on it. They're working on rollout across the rest of the country and I know the U of Alberta now subscribes but I'm not sure of their cost structures.

Some other areas that came up that may be of interest to you include the expanded need for breastfeeding spaces. The need for more diaper changing spaces (including in places where male students can access). If the University administration won't provide those services then we need to take the initiative and do so. Particularly in light of changing demographics in grad school. Some universities have a specific councillor and/or area designated for Graduate Students that way you wouldn't have to worry about sitting in the same waiting room as someone you're teaching. To increase survey participation it was suggested that the results from the last survey



be sent out. We won't be able to do with the first annual GSA survey but in the future we can think of doing that. Minimum guaranteed funding package being disclosed to students in advance was suggested along with the restructuring of the comprehensive exam. In my report to Council I'll also provide a brief update on the Tri-Councils and MITACS. It is certainly a worthwhile conference to attend but the cost structure and the locations they utilize mean that without CGSR supporting us in this matter it would be financially challenging or impossible to send a representative.

#### **6.9. Discussion on GSA position statement of safety meeting.**

I start where I finished my report. I think the office of Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning sent a very short notice about the safety meeting.. Further the Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning (Patti McDougall) did not consult with the GSA before organizing this meeting.

Regarding the Student Forum, I think I am supposed to be the GSA leading person forum.

Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning emailed GSA President and VP Academic, but they did not involve me in this. I think GSA President was supposed to ask Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning to contact me in this regards. VP Student Affairs feel that Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning tries to avoid him.

VP Operations asks: Do you think they avoid you as a person or as a position. VP Student Affairs think that they avoid him as a person, he feels it is a systematic underestimated process. He further think that the Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning did not consult the GSA about the safety meeting because they know they had to encounter him, so they avoid it.

GSA President clarified that there is no term of reference that VP Student Affairs is the leading person in the student forums, he further asked: can you show me where this is written, or can you show me this in any of our minutes.

VP Student Affairs: I think VP Operations and Finance know that, Ziad asked in one of our meeting about it. VP Operations replied, I asked specific question and I raised one issue that there is no reason for GSA President to be in that forum, VP academic and Student Affairs should represent the GSA in the forum. GSA President that he asked Patti explicitly why VP Student Affairs was not emailed and selected to set on that forum.

VP Student Affairs: our Bylaw mention explicitly that VP Student Affairs should advocate for all non-academic issues, VP External: my portfolio includes non-academic issues. VP Student

Affairs: you (GSA President) supposed to tell them from the first email, you should contact VP Student Affairs.

GSA President think regarding the residence issue, we cannot tell the University not to have meeting with the students, he added that Patti mentioned the security during the lunch with GSA and USSU execs, but you (VP Student Affairs) was not in the meeting, I think the University is not supposed to consult with GSA about every small issue.

VP Academic: I live in the residence, and I see many problems I am part of that community, but if you (VP Student Affairs) feels that you are underestimated talk about this during our safety meeting tomorrow.

VP Finance: we should be professional in addressing all of these issues. GSA President: Hardi if you feel underestimated, you can meet Patti and talk to her directly.

VP Operations: It is almost 7:00 and we should move ahead to discuss the motion. GSA President moved a motion to table this discussion after discussing motion 7.1. all in favour  
Motion carries

## **7. Motions**

7.1. Whereas the GSA Bylaws indicate that executive members cannot spend more than ten percent (10%) or five hundred dollars (\$500), whichever amount is larger of any budget line without a majority vote of the Executive. Whereas it was agreed that (September 23 2015 Executive Meeting) the VP Finance will flag any/all transactions that meet the threshold and submit an email digest of them to the rest of the exec. team. Whereas that procedure has been followed but the acquisition of Non-Profit Directors and Officers Liability coverage is a new and significant expenditure best approved in person for reasons of clarity and transparency.

BIRT the GSA authorize the expenditure of \$1,100 (note this above and beyond our commercial liability and property coverage) on this Insurance for a 12-month policy year per the recommendation of both our Insurance Broker and Auditors. **[D. Bennett]**

[Attachment](#)

Discussion on the motion:

VP Finance showed all the execs a short video explaining what this insurance, and why it is important. GSA President feel that there might be small conflict of interest: It sounds like we are trying to protect ourselves, so I will abstain in voting on this motion

VP Operations feels that the possibility of facing such situation where we need this insurance coverage is very low.

VP Finance: this insurance will not cover any illegal act. VP Operation: I don't think we will get any benefit from this insurance.

The President suggested to move this discussion to the Council. VP Operations think there is no need to go to the council, execs can move a motion and vote, VP Student Affairs agreed with VP Operations.

VP Finance moved a motion, seconded by GSA President

All in favour (4), opposed (1), abstention: (1)

**Motion carries**

### **Discussion on Item 6.9 (Cont.)**

VP Operation asked VP Student Affairs: Did any student complained about the safety meeting short notice? VP Student Affairs: No. VP Operation: Then we cannot assume this is a real problem, it is your own assumption, you build this on assumption not a real complain from the students. VP Operation think as well that GSA should keep good relationship with the University, and we should be strategic in approaching the University admin and use appropriate language. VP Student Affairs read the email he sent to Patti, and he added that he always keep using good language when he contact them, he added: the way I approach people is different that how I talk during the exec meetings, I keep high level of proficiency when I talk to the University administration.

**8. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:24PM. Moved by GSA President, seconded by VP Operations. All in favour